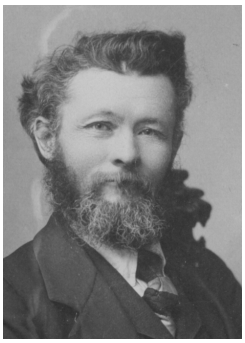
Ernst Skarstedt (1857-1929)



Ernst Teofil Skarstedt was the first author and newspaper publisher to publish in Swedish in Oregon. He was born in 1857 into a prominent church family in the province of Bohuslän, Sweden. Ignoring his father's wish that he follow an academic career, Skarstedt immigrated to the United States in 1878 and spent the rest of his life as a somewhat inept homesteader in the Pacific Northwest and an outstanding journalist, author, and Swedish-American newspaper editor in Chicago (*Svenska Amerikanaren*), San Francisco (*Vestkusten*), and New York (*Nordstjernan*).

In 1889, following the death of his first wife, Skarstedt published *Vid hennes sida* (*By Her Side*), part biography and part tribute to his wife Anna. It was the first book published in Swedish in the state of Oregon. A year later, having moved to Portland from Vancouver, Washington, Skarstedt became the first to attempt a Swedish newspaper. *Demokraten* (*The Democrat*) turned out to be a short-lived campaign paper aimed at educating Swedes about local politics. In Portland in 1890, Skarstedt also published *Oregon och Washington: Dessa staters historia, resurser och folkliv* (*Oregon and Washington: The History, Resources and Folklore of These States*), a volume that combined history with a handbook for potential settlers.

Even though Skarstedt moved to San Francisco in 1891, he returned frequently and traveled the state widely from 1908 to 1910. In 1911, he published the last volume in his trilogy about the Swedes in the Far West: *Oregon och dess svenska befolkning* (*Oregon and its Swedish Population*). A blend of Oregon history and Swedish Oregon history, the book includes ninety-eight thumbnail biographies of prominent Swedes. Ernst Skarstedt died in Seattle in 1929.

Written by Lars Nordstrom

Further Reading:

Lars Nordström, comp., ed. *Swedish Oregon*, Portland: Swedish Roots in Oregon Press, 2008.

Lindquist, Emory. *An Immigrant's American Odyssey: A Biography of Ernst Skarstedt*. Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Historical Society, 1974.

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